

Prayer List

Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

What ruler was eaten by worms before he died?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

David - 2 Samuel 23:14-17

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Who Can Understand God?

Robert F. Turner

It seems my brethren need to reread Job 38, as Jehovah upbraids those who speak and write as though they could explain God. And while it is handy, read also Job's penitent confession: "Therefore have I uttered that which I understand not, Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not . . . Wherefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes" (42:1-6). The current controversy over the nature of Immanuel (God with us, Matt. 1:23), is becoming ridiculous.

This is not to say we should refrain from discussing what the Word of God says about the incarnate Son of God. But serious reflection should tell all of us that many revealed truths concerning God in the flesh must be received by faith, and are not subject to finite comprehension. It certainly is not my intention to add to the bold pronouncements that seem to accompany some articles on the subject; but rather, I want to remind history buffs of a unity meeting that took place in Lexington, Kentucky on January 1, 1832. "Raccoon" John Smith was

the speaker, and a more complete account of matters may be read in Life of Elder John Smith, by John A. Williams (37 1); or The Church, Falling A way, and Restoration, by J.W. Shepherd (253).

Smith said, "God has but one people on the earth. He has given to them but one Book, and therein exhorts and commands them to be one family. A union such as we plead for - a union of God's people on that one Book - must, then, be practicable

"But an amalgamation of sects is not such a union as Christ prayed for, and God enjoins. To agree to be one upon any system of human invention would be contrary to his will, and could never be a blessing to the Church or the world; therefore the only union practicable or desirable must be based on the Word of God, as the only rule of faith and practice.

"There are certain abstruse or speculative matters - such as the mode of the Divine Existence, and the Ground and Nature of the Atonement - that have, for centuries, been themes of discussion among Christians. These questions are as far from being settled now as they were in the beginning of the controversy. By a needless and intemperate discussion of them much feeling has been provoked, and divisions have been produced.

"For several years past I have tried to speak on such subjects only in the language of inspiration; for it can offend no one to say about those things just what the Lord himself has said. In this scriptural style of speech all Christians should be agreed. It can not be wrong - it can

not do harm. If I come to the passage, 'My Father is greater than I,' I will quote it, but will not stop to speculate upon the inferiority of the Son. If I read, 'Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God,' I will not stop to speculate upon the consubstantial nature of the Father and the Son. I will not linger to build a theory on such texts, and thus encourage a speculative and wrangling spirit among my brethren.

"I will present these subjects only in the words which the Lord has given to me. I know he will not be displeased if we say just what he has said. Whatever opinions about these and similar subjects I may have reached, in the course of my investigations, if I never distract the church of God with them, or seek to impose them on my brethren, they will never do the world any harm Let us then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us all come to the Bible, and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the Light we need."

There are statements in Smith's full speech that I would have to question. We must remember the circumstances of this early period in "restoration" efforts, and their but recent coming out of sectarianism. But his warning about speculative matters, and things of deity that are beyond man, are words that need repeating today. I have said before that I believe some were "whittling on God's end of the stick," and it seems this is again applicable.